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THE MONTHLY GULL BULLETIN

Volume 54 Berkeley, Calif. December 1972 Number 12

COVEL'S CONSERVATION CORNER

IT IS SOMEWHAT frustrating to have to write this column on the eve of the election—too soon to comment on the results, which will affect California living for many years. One momentous decision affecting the environment, however, has already been made, not by the legislature or the voters, but by the State Supreme Court when it ruled on September 23 in the Mammoth Lakes case that all major private building projects would require environmental impact studies. City councils, county supervisors, planning commissions, and building permit authorities were thrown into a confusion bordering on panic. Some public officials demanded remedial action to reduce or cushion the impact on private industry. The League of California Cities claimed that overburdened planning departments (i.e. the ones that now *must* do what they should have been doing all along) must have state financial aid to handle mounting work loads. The Alameda County Board of Supervisors and the San Francisco planning commission adopted "criteria" for their staffs to decide in what cases impact studies would be desired. Some of these echo the warnings of ecologists only a few years back: studies should be made when the proposed development may "damage areas of unique interest or scenic beauty; substantially alter the pattern of behavior for a local species of animal; interfere with important breeding or feeding grounds; disturb the ecological balance of a land or water area."

Already the Alameda City Council has decided to hire "a reputable and independent consultant" to study the environmental impact of the Harbor Bay Isle project, as Mayor LaCroix originally demanded. Other developments proposed for the estuary and west end of the island must also have impact studies. The little fishing and bird-watching area on the Alameda side of the bridge over the San Leandro channel will become residential, but Elsie Roemer informs us that a peripheral walk will be provided for public use. Doolittle Pond," scheduled for solid waste fill increases in importance as a shorebird loafing area, and birders should get acquainted with Oakland's new "Bay Park Refuge" on San Leandro Bay, reached at the west end of Edgewater Drive.

Bertha Underhill has fowarded correspondence from a rancher friend at Dixon, who vigorously defends other sheep ranchers in the Saeramento Valley against certain eager conservationists who would ban all coyote control. This all came about through a contribution to *California Livestock News* by Glen Eidman, a Willows rancher and farm advisor, who cited costly lamb losses from coyotes in some areas and who pleaded the continuation of sensible controls. The *San Francisco Chronicle* reprinted Mr. Eidman's article, which evoked a storm of letters, some reportedly abusive. My predator protector friends may blast me for this, but please, when you are birding upcountry, why not drop in and hear the sheep ranchers' side of thc story? There's plenty of California range without sheep where coyotes should be welcome.

Is falconry a dying sport? According to information just received, there are some 700 registered falconers in California, with 120 of these in the East Bay. There are at least 13 Peregrines in Alameda and Contra Costa counties—more than exist in the wild in California! Before you become too indignant, somc of these birds represent Old World subspecies. It would be difficult for you to get a list of these falconers from the Department of Fish and Game—some of them apparently don't wish to be known to the public or other falconers.

The November issue of Ohlone Audubon Society's *Kite Call* announced that $8 million was added to the federal budget for purchasing lands for the new San Francisco Bay Wildlife Refuge. (It is possible, however, for the Bureau of the Budget to chop off these additional funds.) Only a tiny fraction of those 21,662 acres are now publicly owned, and the Westbay tidelands suit must still be fought.

PAUL COVEL, *Conservation Chairman*

JOIN THE GGAS XMAS COUNT

THE OAKLAND (GGAS) CHRISTMAS COUNT will be held on December 17 this year. Please write me *immediately* if you would like to participate (1500 Milvia St., Berkeley 94709). Indicate the area you would like to count if you have a preference; you will be accommodated if possible. You will find out whom to meet, where, and when by return mail.

It should be noted that you do not have to be an expert field ornithologist to participate; less experieneed birders will work with more experienced people (making this an excellent opportunity to learn once and for all how to tell a Ruby-crowned Kinglet from a Hutton's Vireo). If, you cannot count in the field, you may want to count your feeder(if, of course, it lies within the count area, a 15-milc diameter circle, centered on the SW junction of Arimo and Vista in Oakland). This would be particularly helpful if your feeder happens to be attracting something of special interest (a White-throated Sparrow, Slate-colored Junco, etc.) this winter. Send me any feeder reports by December 18, 1972.

Partieipants in this year's eount will be invited to meet afterwards for hot soup and coffee while we make up a preliminary ehecklist. The seeret of finding birds is having people out looking for them; we hope many of you will succumb to the lure of the count this year. A speeial plea to those who will be helping with the Point Reyes eount on the 16th: please save enough energy to set the alarm again before retiring that night! If people have speeial questions, or need last-minute information, I ean be reached at 526-3181. ALAN PISTORIUS, *Xmas Count Chairman.*

NOTE: Baron McLean has asked us to mention the two Sonoma Christmas counts and would like to invite anyone interested in participating to eontaet him immediately. The Santa Rosa count will be held on Saturday, December 23, and the Western Sonoma County count on Saturday, Deeember 30. Mr. MeLean's address is 1002 Danbeck Ave., Santa Rosa 95404. His telephone number is (707) 545-0851.

GGAS GENERAL MEETING FOR DECEMBER

GGAS VICE PRESIDENT Ray Higgs will present a talk and slide show at the Deeember meeting to be held at the Rotary Natural Science Center, Lakeside Park, Oakland, on **Thursday, December 14** at **7:30 P.M.** Ray, whose life list is nearing 450 speeies, has photographed about 300 species of North Ameriean birds. He will share about 120 of these with us at the December meeting. This is a good opportunity for beginners to get better acquainted with many speeies they might not have seen yet.

BIRDING CALENDAR

THE MOST IMPORTANT, instructive, useful, and enjoyable birding activity you ean engage in this month is the Christmas Count. For beginners, it offers an opportunity to see many new species, explore new birding areas, and learn from the "pros" about such seemingly arcane matters as the proper way to "squeak" up songbirds, how to stealthily ereep through a marsh, how to "guesstimate" a giant floek of ducks, and how to distinguish the various gulls. Don't be shy about participating. Everyone is both weleome and needed.

Serious birdwatehers (excuse me, "field ornithologists"), if asked about the purpose and appeal of the Christmas Count, may explain that it provides useful information about the winter distribution of North Ameriean speeies, the population status of various species, and so on. This is true, of eourse, but I suspeet the thing that gets people to skulk about damp sloughs in the middle if winter is not so much the opportunity to eontribute to scientifie knowledge as it is the element of sport, of competition, that seems to characterize the annual census. This is good, of course, because how many of us are dedicated researehers? How many of us would leave our fires and hot toddies if it weren't for the heady excitement and convivial fellowship that attend the Christmas Count? Not many, I suspect.

The element of competition assumes many forms. The grand prize, as it were, goes to the count that racks up the most species. Right now, that means finding 200 or more species and competing with such high-powered counts as those of Cocoa, Florida; Freeport and Brownsville, Texas; San Diego, Santa Barbara, and Point Reyes, California. These are the big honchos of the bird count because each is blessed with an unusual combination of habitats and weather that attracts enormous numbers of wintering birds.

But there are lesser forms of competition as well: who can find the most individuals of a single species? who can claim the largest number of such individual high counts? which state can claim the most counts among the top ten in the nation? (This honor traditionally goes to California.) In individual counts, of course, there is friendly competition for the honors of finding the most species or, even better, for finding the strangest, most unexpected, most far-out bird of the day. An Ocellated Tapaculo in Milpitas? Astounding! Don't hold your breath for a Tapaculo, but strange things do happen on Christmas counts largely because so many people are out at one time.

The Bay Area is one of the top five winter birding areas in the United States and boasts a number of outstanding counts every year. You may attend as many as possible simply by contacting the various chapters hosting events.

FIELD TRIPS FOR DECEMBER

Sunday, December 3: Lake Hennessey (Conn Dam) in Napa County. Meet at **8:30 A.M.** at the intersection of Trancas Street and the Silverado Trail. We will bird at the bridge for a half-hour and caravan to the lake promptly at **9 A.M.** Drive to the town of Napa. Drive north on highway 29. Turn right on Trancas Street, and drive one mile to the rendezvous point. Leader: Lawrence Curl (939-5841)

Wednesday, December 6: University of California Botanical Gardens in Berkeley. Take Canyon Drive (the road that leads behind the football stadium) and follow it to the gardens. Meet at **9 A.M.** in the small parking lot. Lunch optional. Leader: Patricia Boese (339-8374)

Saturday and Sunday, December 9 and **10:** Sacramento Wildlife Refuge in Willows and Gray Lodge Waterfowl Refuge in Gridley. This year we will visit the refuges in reverse order from former trips. On **Saturday,** meet at the Sacramento refuge, seven miles south of Willows on old highway five, at **9 A.M.** On **Sunday,** meet at Gray Lodge at **9 A.M.** Approach via highway 99 out of Live Oak or Gridley. If you have not made motel reservations, do so now by telephoning one of the following: Pacific Motel, Gridley; Marklay's Motel, Gridley; Buckner's Motel, Biggs. Mention Audubon. Or, you may want to camp at the Colusa-Sacramento state park, one-half mile out of Colusa. If you don't wish to stay overnight, you may, of course, join the group either Saturday or Sunday morning at the appointed meeting places given above. On Saturday night, the group will

have dinner at Western Smorgy in Gridley (all you can eat for $1.99). They will fix a box lunch on request. Leader: Harry Adamson (283-2164).

Sunday, December 17: Oakland Christmas Count (see article in this issue for details).

Sunday, December 31: Come to Golden Gate Park for a quiet bird trip after the excitement of the Christmas counts. Meet at **9 A.M.** at the Chain of Lakes at 43rd Avenue and Fulton. Leader: Alice Radcliffe (563-5794).

Thursday, December 14: no-leader trip in Tilden Park. Meet at **9 A.M.** at the Little Farm. **Wednesday, December 27:** no-leader trip in Golden Gate Park. Meet at **9 A.M.** at the Academy of Sciences.

Dates to hold: 1/20/73—Dillon's Beach; 2/10-11—Los Banos; 2/25—bus trip to the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta near Thornton; 4/29—Livermore. PAT TRIGGS, *Field Trips Chairman*

FIELD OBSERVATIONS

A SPECIAL REPORT from Dr. Laurence C. Binford of the California Academy of Sciences: from Sept. 21 through Oct. 31 at Point Diablo (Marin headlands west of the Golden Gate Bridge) Dr. Binford spent 19 partial days and counted 3,359 Falconiform birds of 12 species. "Included were 17 *Broad-winged Hawks,* all immatures, including one *dark phase,* an extremely rare bird anywhere." His other intresting observations include: a total of 8,457 Band-tailed Pigeons; 1,018 *Vaux Swifts* on Sept. 29; 60 *Black Swifts* on Sept. 28, and nine on Oct. 13; one *Townsend's Solitaire* on Oct. 3; 28 flocks (including a number of singles) of *Evening Grosbeaks* totaling 223 birds; one *Pinyon Jay* on Oct. 7; one *Clark's Nutcracker* on Oct. 6, two on Oct. 18, and one on Oct. 21; single *Short-eared Owls* on Oct. 18 and Oct. 27; and six *Red Crossbills* on Oct. 23.

Red-necked Grebe, Oct. 22, Drake's Bay—VR, LCB, WK.
New Zealand Shearwater, two, Sept. 23, Monterey Bay—VR, WR, SB; five, Oct. 7, Monterey Bay—VR, AB, SB, RW.
Blue Goose, Oct. 21, Tule Lake Refuge—GP.
Wood Duck, 15, Oct. 22, Jewel Lake, Tilden Park; pair, Oct. 25-26—JH, VS.
Oldsquaw female, Oct. 22, south point cove, Pt. Reyes—LCB, VR, WK.
Harlequin Duck, 12 males, Oct. 1, five miles south of Mendocino-Sonoma county line—LL.
Common Scoter, 12, Oct. 22, south point cove, Pt. Reyes—LCB, VR, WK.
White-tailed Kite, Oct. 30, Wildcat Canyon west of Tilden—GZ.
Broad-winged Hawk, two, Nov. 2, Marin headlands—LCB, WMP.
Rough-legged Hawk, Oct. 18, Las Trampas ridge—SSW, Oct. 28, Tubbs Island—JR; Oct. 29, Rodeo Lagoon—BF.
Ferruginous Hawk, Oct. 22, Mendoza Ranch, Pt. Reyes—VR, LCB, WK.

Golden Eagle, one immature, Sept. 9, Pt Reyes—LCB, VR; five, Oct. 28, San Luis Reservoir—L & FN.
Bald Eagle, Oct. 26, Inverness—GB.
Pigeon Hawk, Oct. 1, Dillon Beach—RH; Oct. 20, San Rafael, Oct. 30, Pt. Reyes Station—WMP, AM.
Pomarine Jaeger, Oct. 22, Drake's Bay—VR, LCB, WK.
Skua, Oct. 7, Monterey Bay—California Field Ornithologists' boat trip, VR, AB, RW, SB.
Common Murre, Oct. 22, Alameda South Shore—D & PS.
Thick-billed Murre, Oct. 7, Monterey Bay—CFO boat trip, VR, RS *et.al.*
Great Gray Owl, Four, Sept. 30, Crane Flat, Yosemite; one immature Sept. 30, Perigoy Meadow—VR, JRc, CW; two, Oct. 8, Crane Flat—S & KB.
Poor-will, Oct. 22, Mendoza Ranch, Pt. Reyes—LCB, VR, WK.
Eastern Kingbird, Sept. 2, Mendoza Ranch—VR, LCB, RS.
Tropical Kingbird, Oct. 4, Inverness Motel—GB.
Clark's Nutcracker, Sept. 21, Pt. Reyes—PV, GB; Oct. 1, Mt. Diablo—C & FT; six, Oct. 14, Inverness Ridge—JK. CC.
Dipper, Oct. 30, Tilden Park golf course stream—GA.
White Wagtail, Oct. 20, Ventura—SS.
Nashville Warbler, Oct. 13, Belmont—FN.
Magnolia Warbler male, Oct. 24, Belmont—FN.
Black-throated Blue Warbler male, Oct. 17, Jewel Lake, Tilden Park—VH, BSU.
Hermit Warbler, two, Oct. 14, Golden Gate Park—BF, DS.
Blackpoll Warbler, Oct. 15, Pt. Reyes—DDS.
Palm Warbler, two, Oct. 15, Pt. Reyes—DDS.
Yellow-headed Blackbird, male, Sept. 24, Mendoza Ranch, Pt Reyes—SSW, GH; Oct. 22 near Bolinas tree farm—BP.
Evening Grosbeak, two, Oct 5, San Rafael—WMP; one, Oct. 27, Berkeley—VR.
Red Crossbill , Oct. 14, Alamo—JR; Oct. 28, Berkeley—VR.
Vesper Sparrow, Oct. 30, Inverness—GB.
White-throated Sparrow, adult, Oct. 25, Berkeley—JC; adult & immature, Oct. 26, Belmont—FN; adult, Oct. 29, Colma—R & ME.
Lincoln's Sparrow, Oct. 14, Berkeley—VR.

Observers: Garth Alton, Steve & Karen Bailey, Alan Baldridge, Laurence C. Binford, Gerard Brady, Cornelia Calhoun, Dave DeSante, Roy & Marie Edmison, Bud Fry, Ray Higgs, John Hollis, Geo. & Vi Homem, John Kipping, Walt Koenig, Larry Lawlor, Alice Mericourt, Leroy & Fran Nelson, George Peyton, Bill Principe, William M. Pursell, Jack Reddall, William Reese, Van Remsen, Jean Richmond, Virginia Sherwood, Don & Paul Sisk, Dixie Sperling, Rich Stallcup, Shumway Suffel, Charles & Frances Townes, Bertha S. Underhill, Peter Veitch, Richard Webster, S. S. Whitehead, Chris Wilson, Gary Zamzow.

VI HOMEM, *Observations Editor.*

NEWS FROM AUDUBON CANYON RANCH

HOG ISLAND, which lies toward the north end of Tomales Bay, is the latest acquisition of Audubon Canyon Ranch. The purchase includes over two acres on the island itself, Duck Island, and six acres of tidelands. This property really should have been included in the Point Reyes National Seashore because it lies close to the western shore of the bay. In its natural state it has real scenic value and is an important recreational asset. It is comforting that no house will ever top the island now.

Other recent purchases include two additional parcels along Walker Creek west of the town of Tomales; a small marsh just north of the town of Marshall; and a parcel of land in Bolinas on which stand a grove of "butterfly" trees, so named because they host each year thousands of wintering monarch butterflies. This property will be called the Audubon Monarch Grove.

At the annual meeting of the board of directors, Dudley S. Hubbard, past president of Marin Audubon Society, was elected chairman; Claire Johnson, president of GGAS, first vice-chairman; Howard B. Allen, second vice-chairman; Aileen Pierson, secretary; and Stan Picher, treasurer.

ANT VOLUNTEER OF THE MONTH

GGAS AND AUDUBON NATURE TRAINING are pleased to announce that the first "Volunteer of the Month" (you'll be reading more of these) is our dear, reliable, conscientious, Gunhilde Osborne. Having faithfully acted as Coordinator of Community Resource Volunteers for three years, Gunny has developed and promoted ANT in the schools of the Bay Area. We honor her and hope that the new community she is moving to will appreciate her as much as we do. Gunny's new address is: 500 W. 9th St. Apt. 1606, Chatanooga, Tenn. 37402.

MEMORIAL GIFTS

GIFTS OF REMEMBRANCE were made to Audubon Canyon Ranch:

In Memory of:	*Gift of*:
Myra Browne	Margaret Macormack
	Natural Science Section of the Sierra Club
Craig Byron Christianson	Mr. & Mrs. George Monheit
Marguerite de Mailly	Margaret Macormack
Charles Grunsky	Margaret Macormack
Earl A. Krafft	Frances Gabbert
	John & Margaret Saulsberry
Mrs. Richard Laist	Margaret Macormack
Jessie Saunders	Carlyn Halde
	Natural Science Section of the Sierra Club
Mrs. Wilson	James L. Kinchen

DR. ALBERT BOLES, *Sanctuary and Memorial Fund Chairman*, 854 Longridge Rd., Oakland 94610 (451-6267).

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Established January 25, 1917 A Branch of the National Audubon Society since 1948

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Send address changes to Membership Secretary promptly; Post Office does not forward *THE GULL*. Monthly meetings—second Thursday 7:30 p.m. Joint membership—Local & National $12 per year, (individual); $15 (family); includes *AUDUBON MAGAZINE* and *THE GULL*. Subscriptions to *THE GULL* separately $2 per year. High school & college student membership $6 per year.

The *Gull* deadline is the first of the month for the following month.